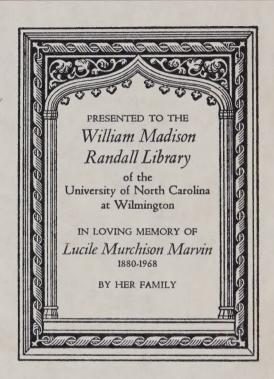
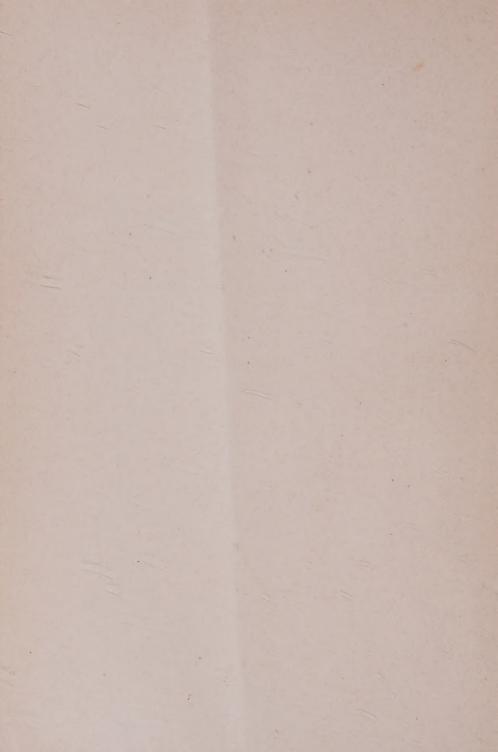


HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE

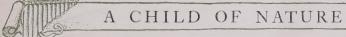




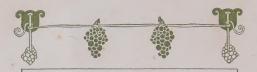












BOOKS BY MR. MABIE

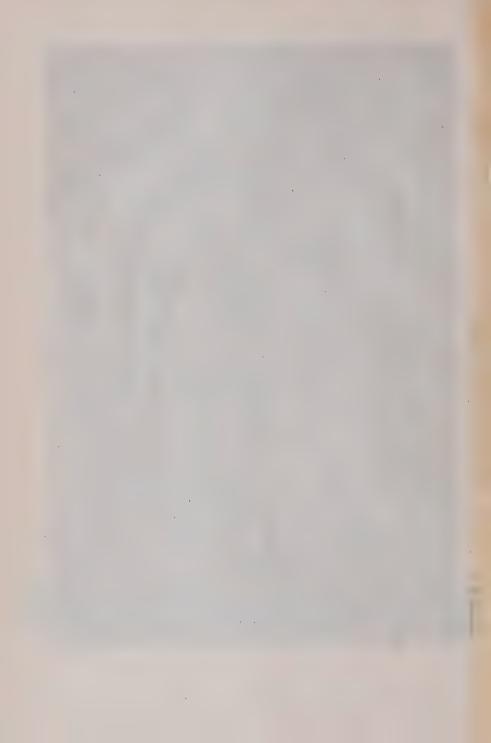
My Study Fire
My Study Fire, Second Series
Under the Trees and Elsewhere
Short Studies in Literature
Essays in Literary Interpretation
Essays on Nature and Culture
Books and Culture
Essays on Work and Culture
The Life of the Spirit
In the Forest of Arden
Norse Stories
William Shakespeare
A Child of Nature

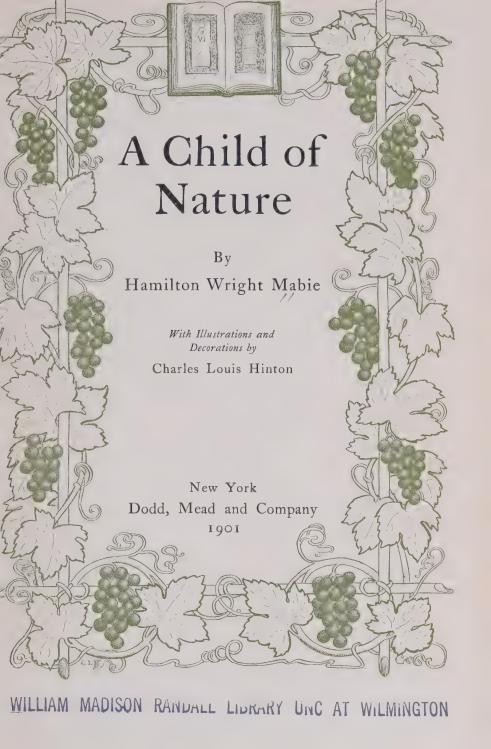


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J. B. H.

A. L. B.

AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE "GONE INTO THE WORLD OF LIGHT"





LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"The delicate melodies which are borne on summer airs through the paths of the woods," Frontispiece
"Truth and beauty bearing a new flower on the ancient stem of time"
"The madness and the gladness in the foaming cup which life holds to its lips" 64
"It would have seemed as if nature missed a familiar presence"





I

My Heart leaps up when I behold
A Rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a Man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.





Ι

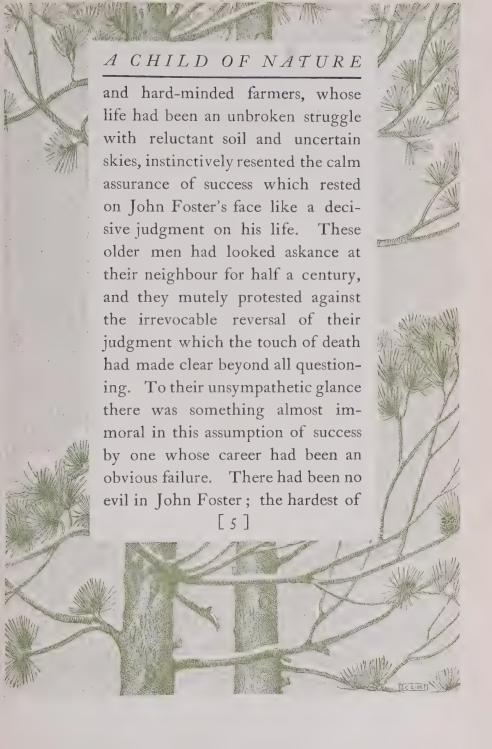
Foster's life, long sinking, like a flickering flame, suddenly went out. He was not an old man so far as years went, but he had lived his life as completely as if his three-score had been lengthened into four-score years and ten. Those who knew him best, and they were few, had marked a sudden change not long before; a relaxation of purpose in a face that had always reflected the man's

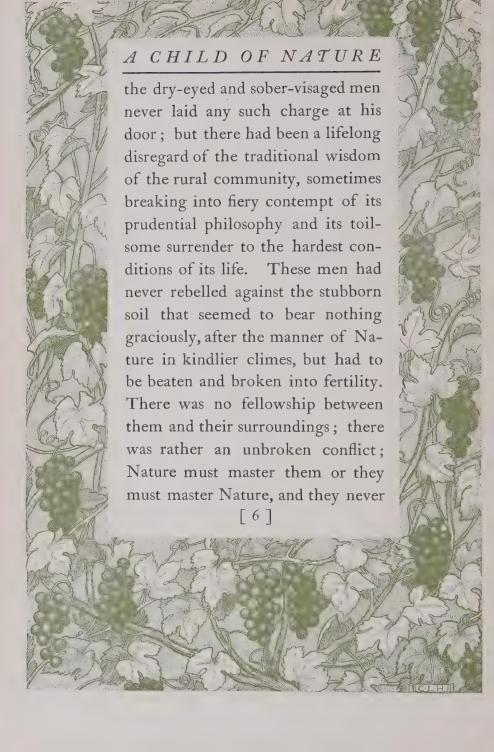
[3]

mind and heart swiftly and unerringly. The quietude and acquiescence that followed a lifelong intensity of expression meant no surrender, but rather a fulfilment of purpose; the concentration of nature was no longer necessary; and the bow, long bent, sprung swiftly back. The neighbours, as they went silently into the darkened room, were awed by the victorious calm which touched the rugged features with something of supernal beauty. The face had been full of an inscrutable meaning, but it had never before borne such an expression not only of quiet acceptance, but of final peace.

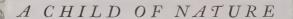
Some of the older men, hard-handed

[4]



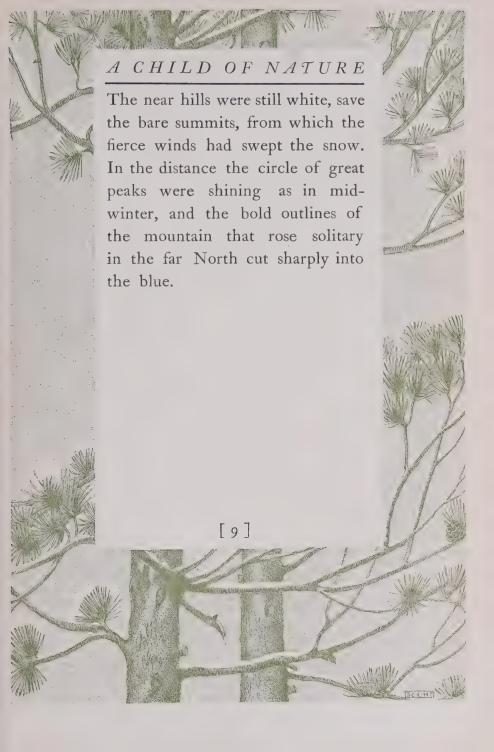


stopped work to discuss the question of alternatives. They had conquered, and in the conquest they found the only evidence of successful living of which they took knowledge. John Foster scorned both the process and the result; he would live open-handed and open-hearted with Nature come what might, and this was the chief cause of his offending. "'Pears like as if he had n't cum out so bad after all," was old Mr. Ferguson's comment as he returned to his neighbours in the hall, awkwardly holding his rarely worn, old-fashioned silk hat in his hand; and this seemed to be the general opinion, with an undercurrent of unexpressed

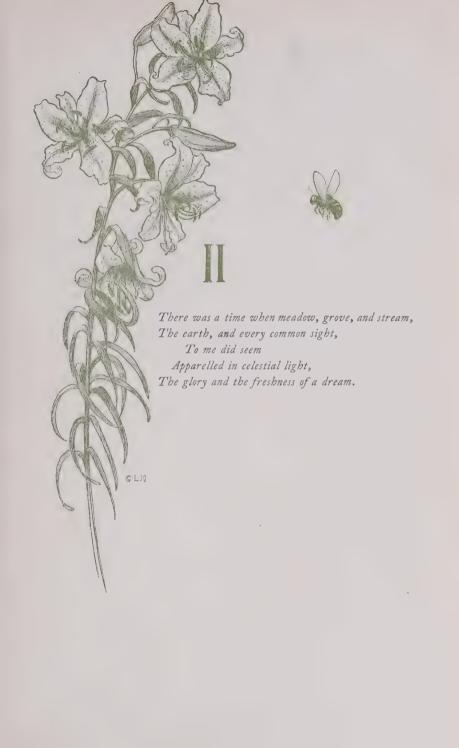


dissent from the verdict which John Foster had taken the liberty, with the mighty aid of death, to pronounce on his own life in defiance of the judgment of those who thought they knew him best.

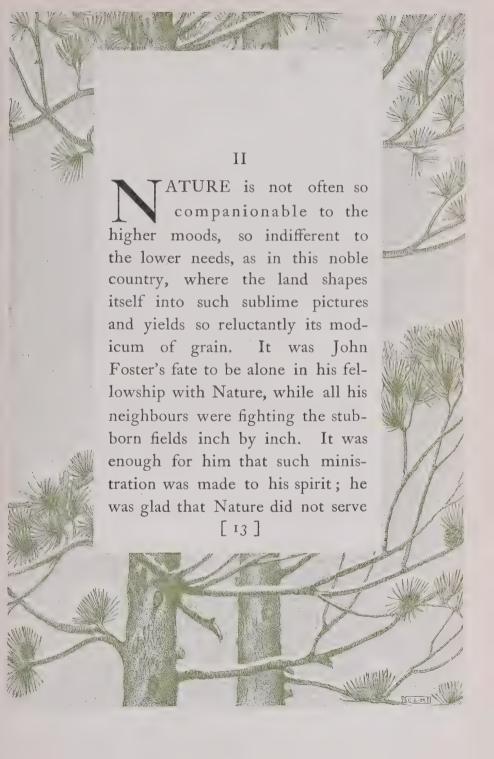
Out of doors there was a winning softness in the air, like a gentle repentance for months of climatic wrongdoing; winter still lingered, but there were signs that its icy hands were loosening their grip on the streams and fields. In that remote and hilly country spring is always a late comer, and it was an intangible touch of colour in the sky and an intangible touch of softness in the atmosphere that betokened its coming at North Hill.

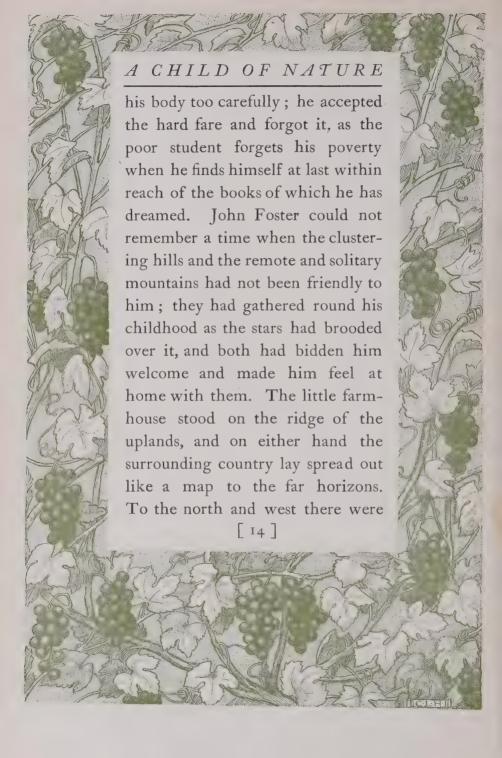










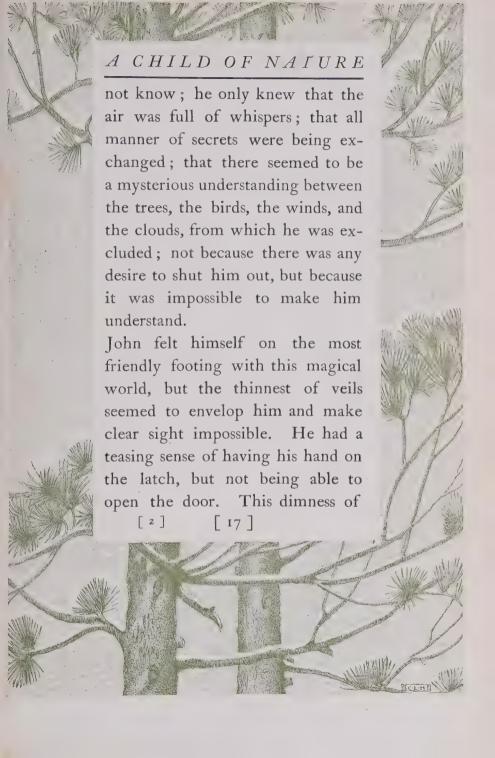


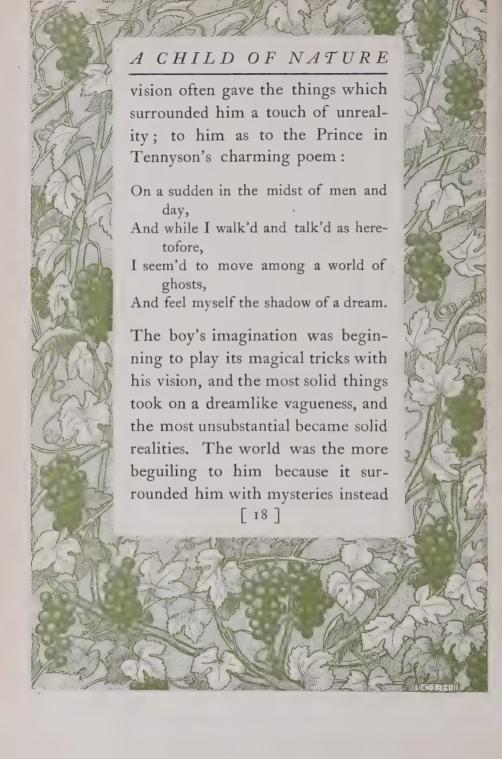
long, irregular processions of hills, sweeping away in sublime disorder to join their leader in the far North; to the south and east a rolling country was divided by rivers and dotted with villages. Few travellers crossed the hill to the village that lay a mile and more beyond, and for the most part John's childhood was as solitary as if it had been cast on an island in mid-seas. But the boy never knew what loneliness was. The deserted road, the rugged hillsides, the woodlands, were populous with life; he knew all their ways and had mastered all their secrets. When daisies were afield he was more active, but frozen rivulets and drifts of

[15]

snow found him hardly less happy. The deepest truths often lie sleeping in the heart of a child long before he knows of their presence or understands what they say to him. He has subtle perceptions of the world about him which seem wholly of the senses, but which register the first delicate contacts of his spirit with Nature. Nothing seems quite real to him, or at least not quite complete, because everything hints at something more wonderful and magical which is to come. There were days when John haunted the woods and waited breathless for something to happen. What he expected he could not have described; he did

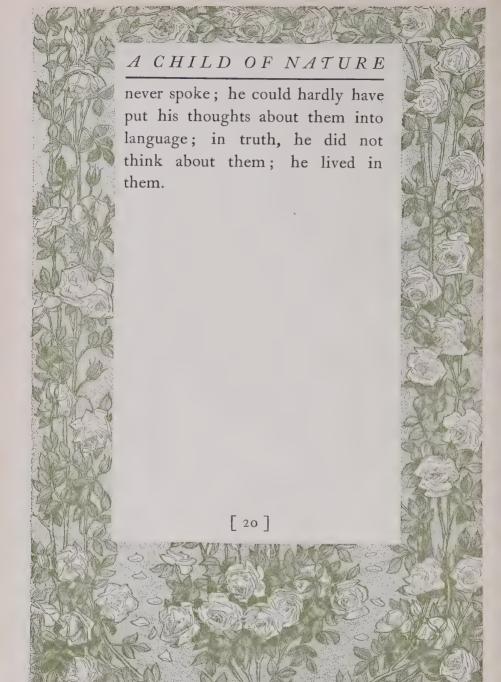
[16]





of revealing sharp outlines and hard realities. It was a wonder world, as it is to every imaginative child; and he went through it with eager step, expecting every moment to surprise its hidden life by sudden and complete discovery. The stretches of forest, the meadows, the hills, the quiet places in the heart of the woods, the stars moving in sublime procession past his window, the glowing of the day and its fading: these things touched his spirit with influences so fine and sensitive that they fashioned him without awakening him out of the dream of childhood. Of this companionship with the wild things of the wood and the bright things of the sky he

[19]







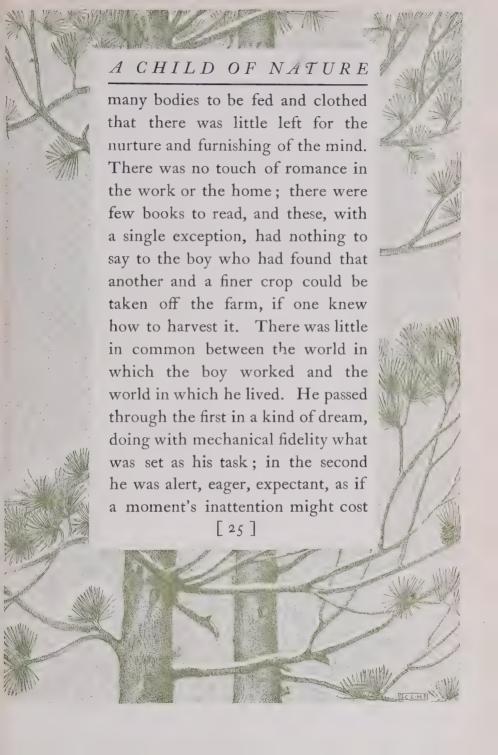
HERE was another life which was as plain and straight as the old road which ran in front of the house; he knew what it had for him to do and he did it; it never once occurred to him to try to escape from it. He seemed born as much a part of it as of the other world of which he never spoke. The life of this tangible world began very early in the morning and ended when the light faded; and it was filled with all manner of things to be done; that miscellaneous work

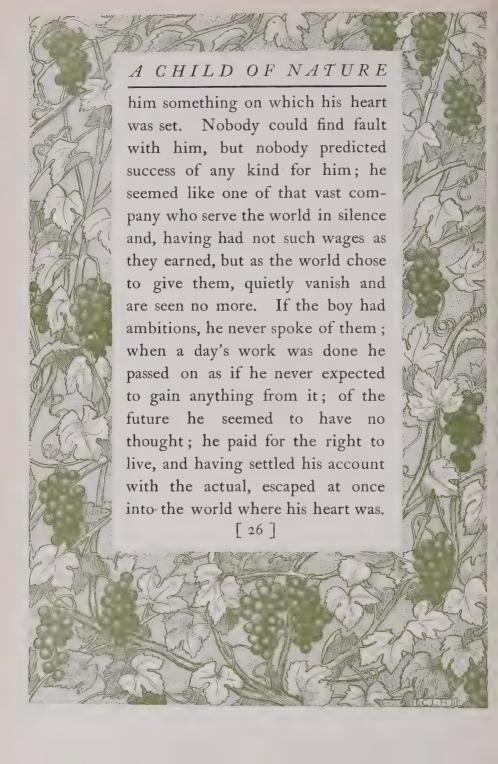
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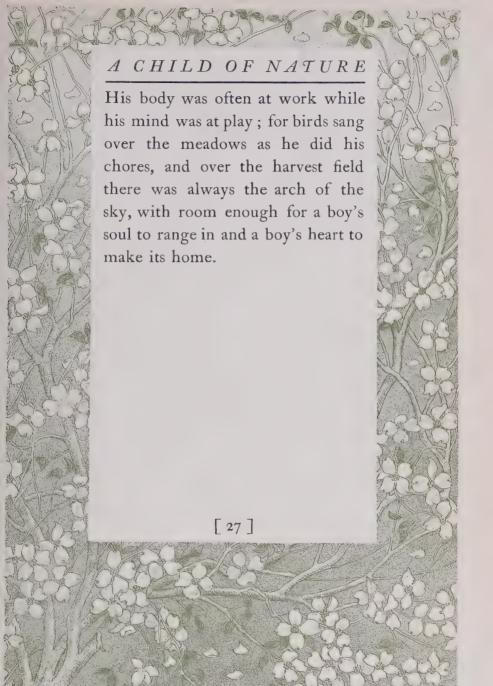
which falls to a boy on a farm. Whenever his feet could save the feet of a man, his feet made the journey to the mill or the blacksmith's forge or the country store; whenever his hands could save a man's hands, his hands did the work. He was at everybody's beck and call; and he knew no higher wisdom than to serve every one as he could. Unconsciously he was grounding himself in reality at the very moment when reality was beginning to have secondary meanings for him.

His surroundings were plain to the point of bareness; for the farm was niggardly in disposition; the house was full of children; there were so

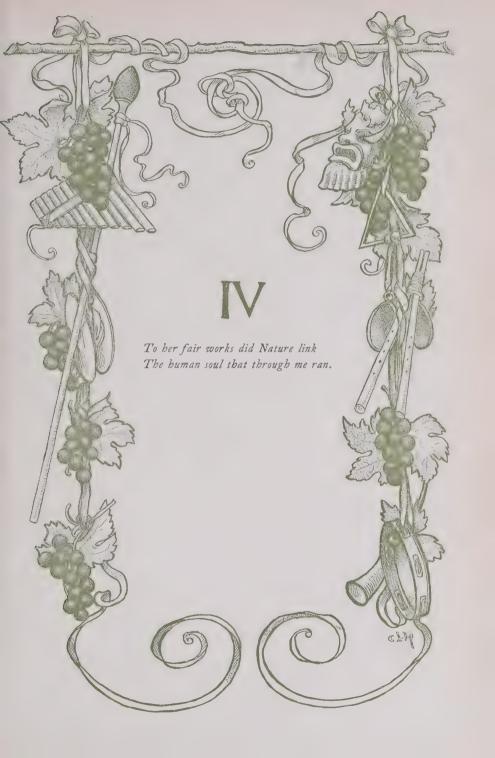
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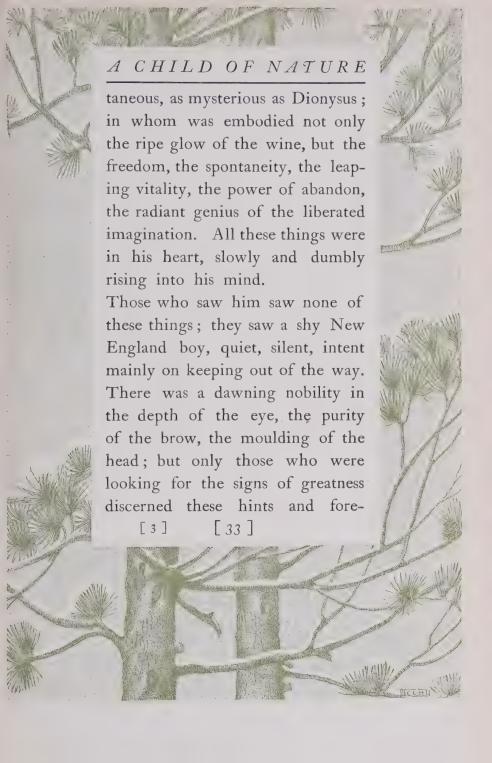
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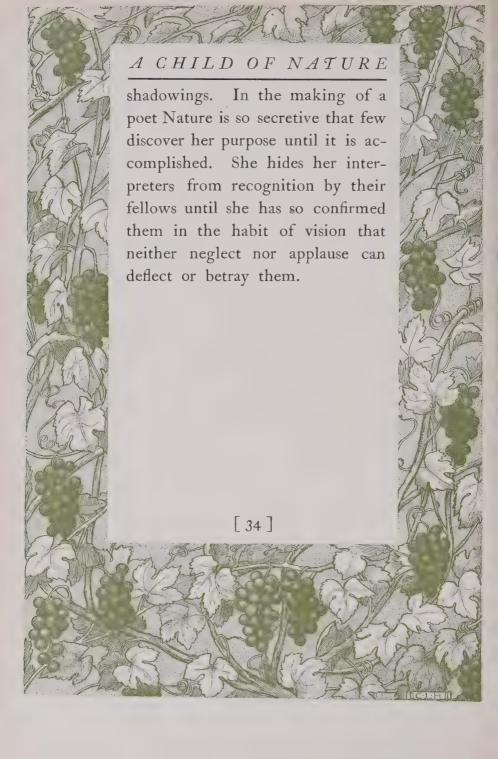
OWEVER silent and uninterested he might be on the farm, he was alive to the tips of his fingers in the woods. The moment he crossed the invisible boundary into the territory of Nature he awoke as if out of sleep; his face was full of expectancy; his eyes were everywhere; his body seemed to be instinct with intelligence, so alert was his attitude and so quick were his movements. All his senses, in their intentness, combined to develop a sixth and higher sense, compounded of sight, hear-

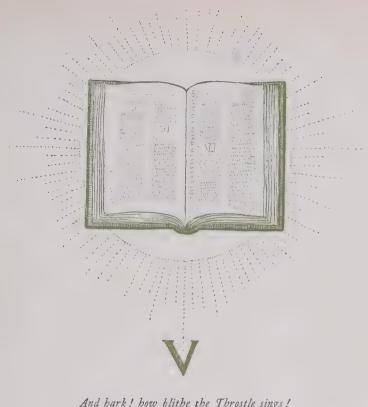
[31]

ing, touch, smell, taste; which in some mysterious way seemed to mingle the life of the body and of the spirit into one indivisible, unconscious, throbbing life; he lived not on the surface of the world, where a thousand beautiful appearances flashed upon his vision and then vanished, but in the deep, flowing, invisible life of Nature. Like the older myth-makers, he was caught up in the universal movement of things and borne aloft into ecstasies of vision. If he had understood his own emotions or been able to give them speech, he would have fashioned out of his dreams and the deep joys of his spirit a figure as elusive, as spon-

[32]







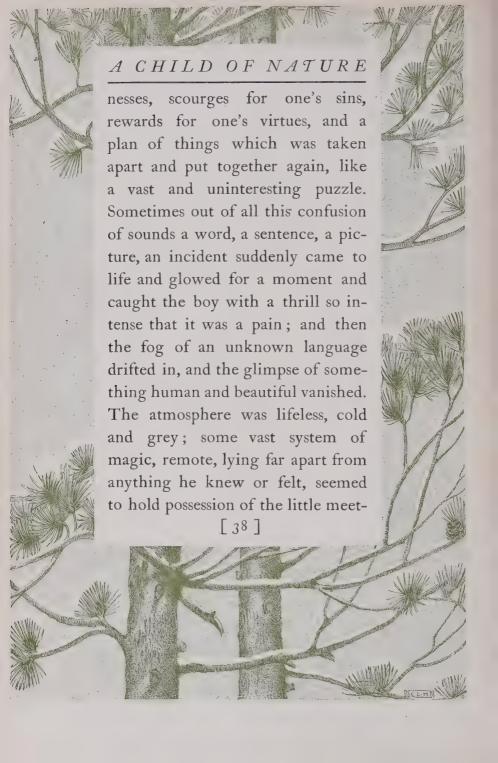
And bark! bow blithe the Throstle sings! He, too, is no mean preacher: Come forth into the light of things, Let nature be your teacher.

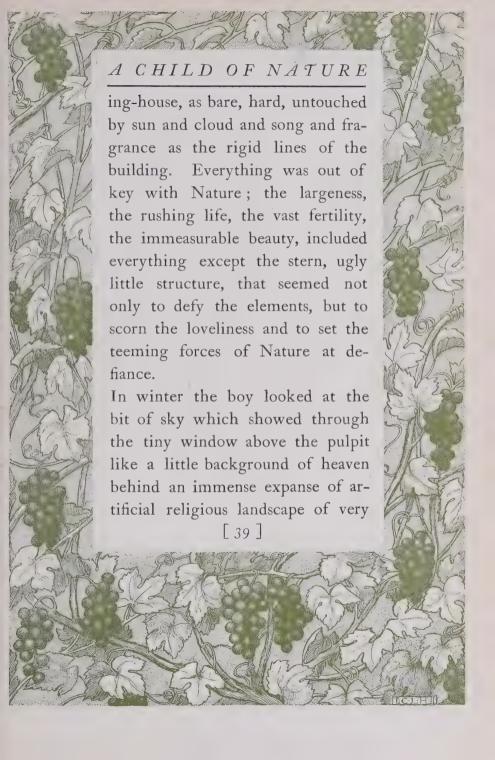
She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood May teach you more of man, Of moral evil and of good, Than all the sages can.



SO far no book had ever spoken to John Foster. He had seen a few volumes, and from one book he had heard many things; but no phrase had ever crossed the threshold of his mind. In the little bare meeting-house at the point where the roads crossed, and from which the whole world seemed to spread out, he heard much discussion of this book and frequent appeals to it; it seemed to be a Pandora's box, in which there were weapons for use against one's adversaries, remedies for one's ill-

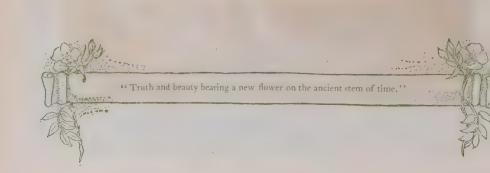




human making, or listened with the inward ear to the faint, far murmur of waters in the mountain brooks; in summer, when the windows were open, he seemed to hear all manner of sounds beating against the walls, as if Nature were trying to break down the barriers and flood the place with light and warmth.

It was a great puzzle to the boy—this strange severance of the bare little building from the world which was so vast and beautiful, this unnatural divorce of the things he heard from the things he knew and felt. One Sunday, while he was still a child and this mystery perplexed and distressed him, a strange hand opened the book and





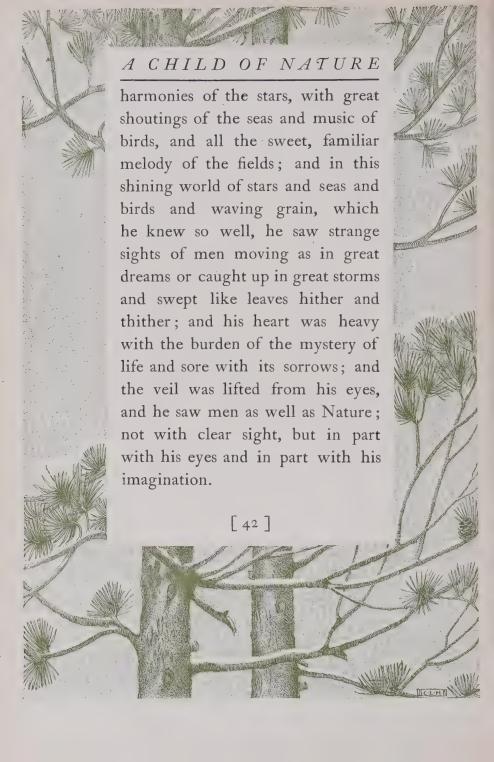


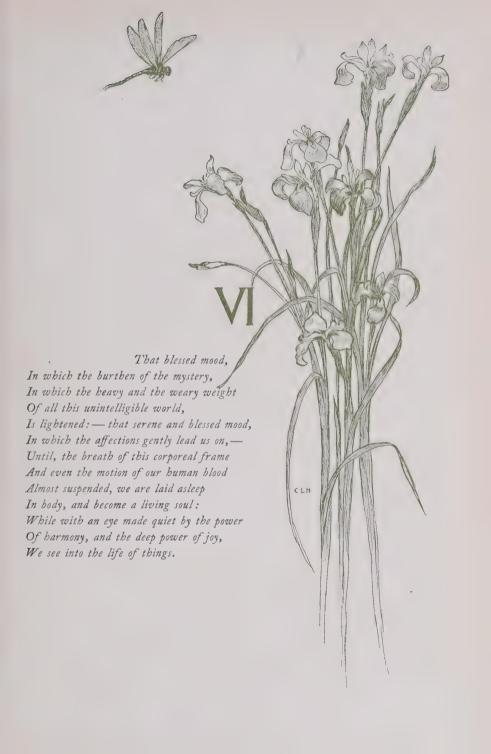


a strange voice read from it. The voice had in it the magic of feeling and of insight; and as it retold one of those old, familiar stories which hold the mystery of life and are deeper than any sounding of plummet, suddenly the book came to life and the walls seemed to dissolve. and with a great rush of fragrance, caught up from fields and woods, Nature swept into the room. there had been the stir of angels' wings in the place it could not have been holier than it became from that hour; for the harmony once heard was never lost again.

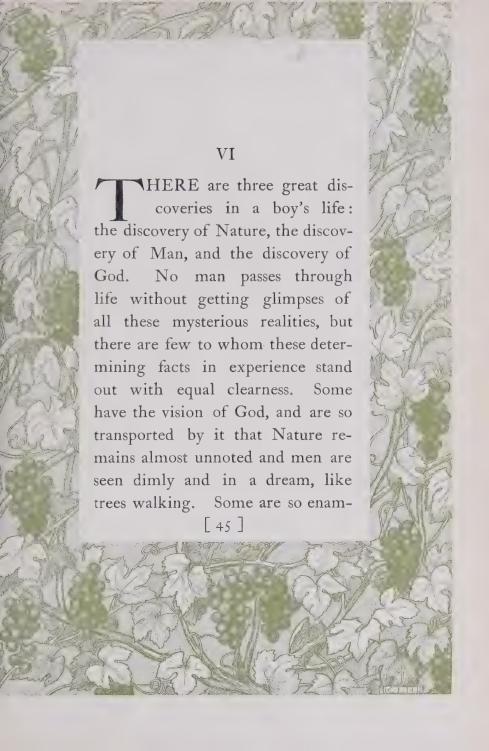
When the boy went home he carried the book into the woods, and there it sang to him strange, deep

[41]



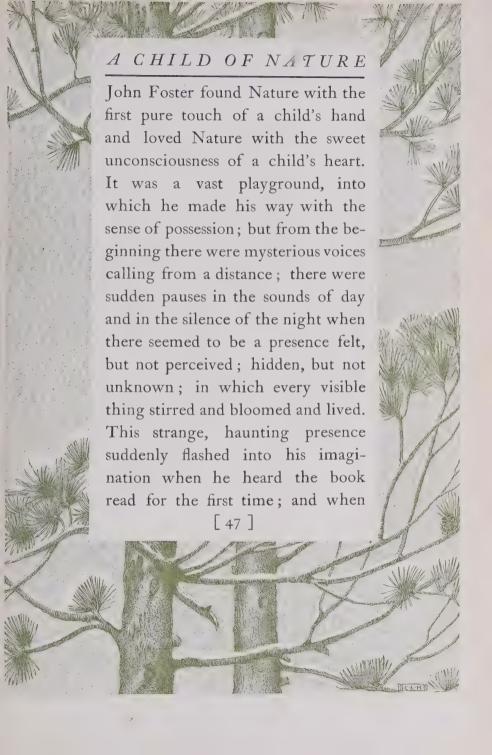


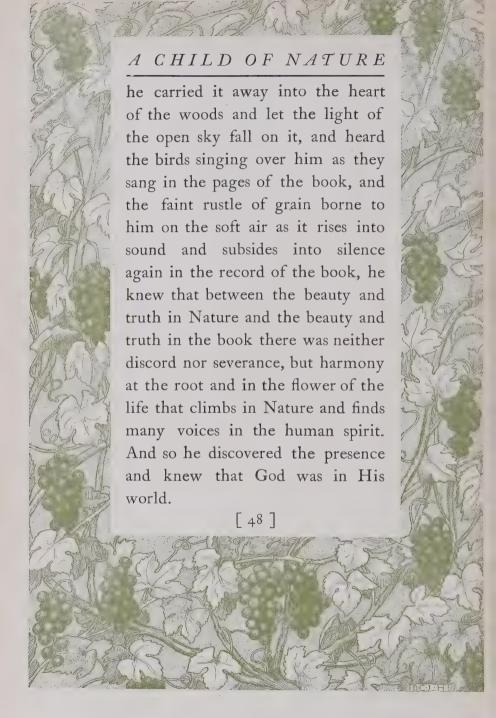




oured with the beauty of the world and so penetrated by its vitality that, like the fauns and dryads, they are bound to the woods and fields and shun the homes and haunts of men, singing strange melodies, in which vibrate the undertones of a life hidden and obscure in glens and deep woods; and others are so caught up in the movement of human life and so passionately sympathetic with it that they have no heart for the joy of the world and no silent rapture for the vision of To each man, according to God. his nature, the mystery shows itself; and they are few and great in whose imagination all the lines of light meet and blend in perfect revelation.

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All this lay deep in the boy's heart, but it was dim in his thought; for the real things of life rise very gradually into consciousness; they are born in experience and slowly ascend out of the deeps where the soul touches the Infinite in the innermost recesses of being. The child plucks the flower with a careless hand and does not know that its roots are deep in the mystery of the universe and that earth and sky meet in its making. It is first a flower to the eye, and then, when its wonderful relationships are understood, it blooms again in the imagination; and it is in this second blooming that art gathers it fresh and fragrant for immortal blossoming.

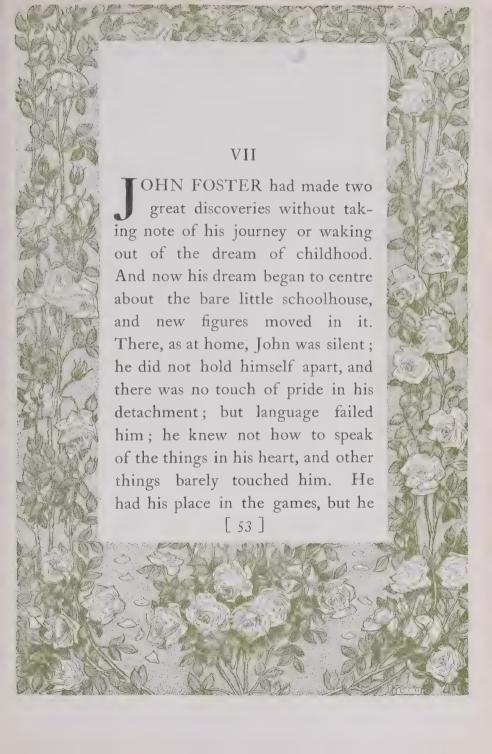
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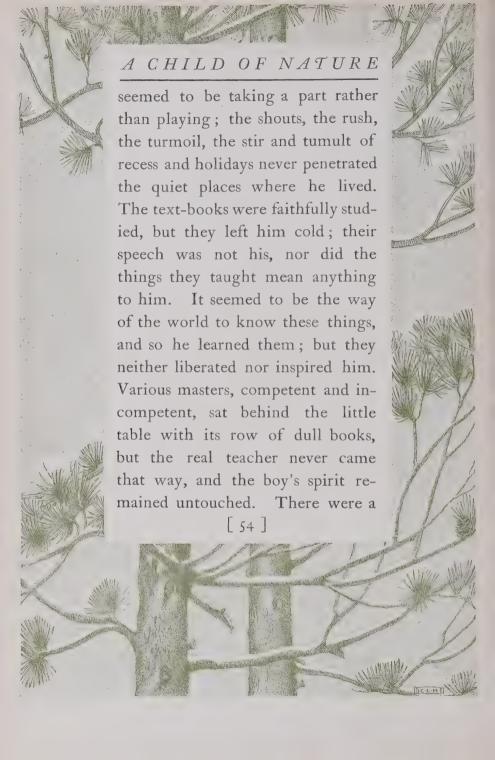


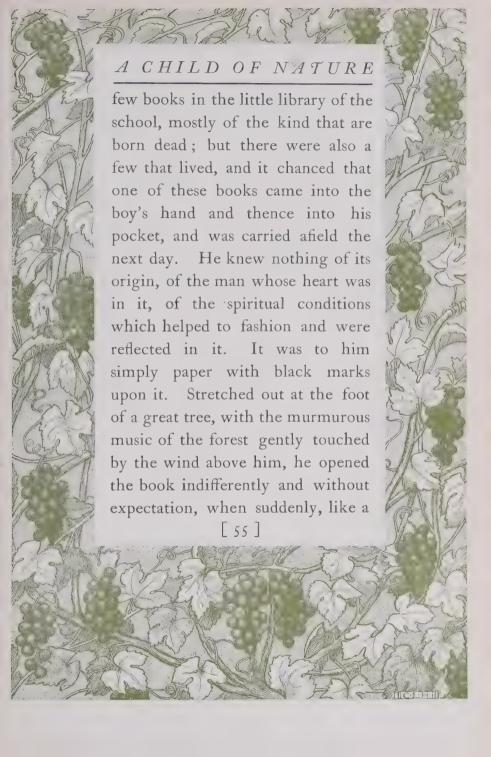


I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy, The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride; Of Him who walked in glory and in joy Following his plough, along the mountain-side: By our own spirits are we deified.



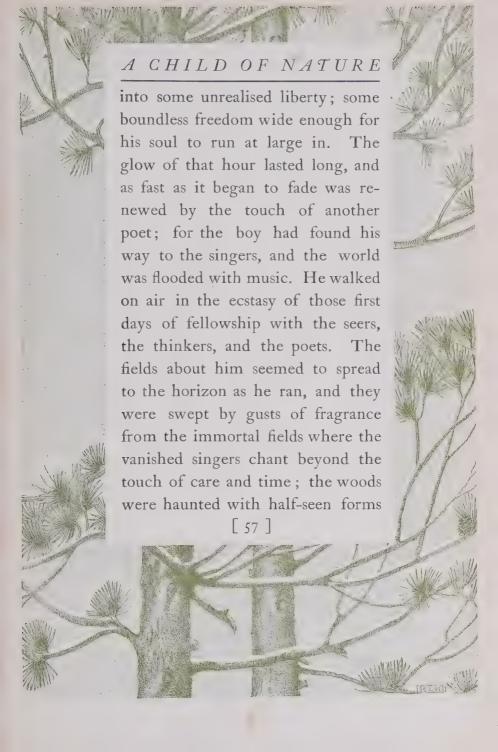


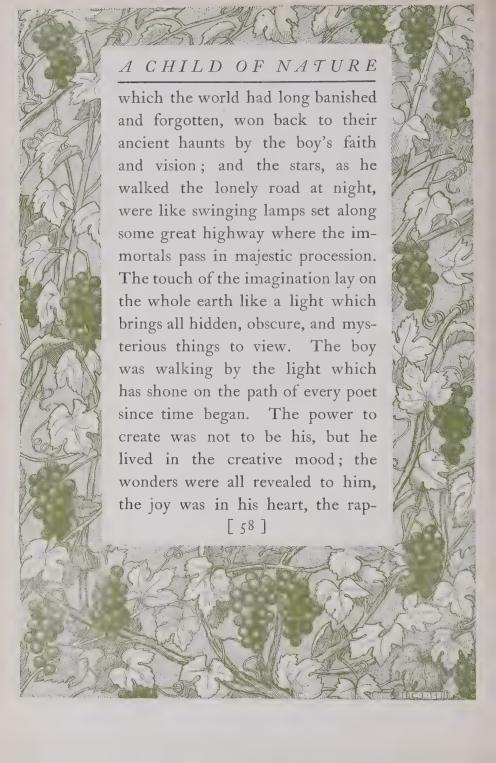


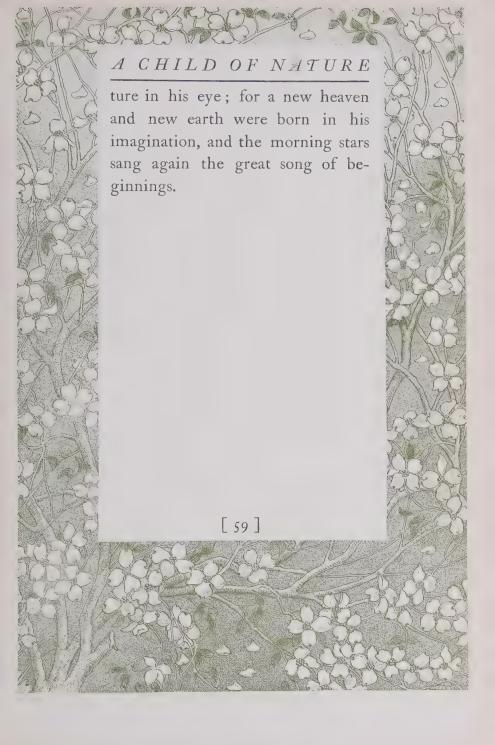


flash of light, a phrase seemed to leap out of the book into his imagination. It was a line from Burns; one of those fine simplicities of speech in which a deep thought lies like a star in a mountain pool. In that moment the boy knew without knowing what art is and means; he caught a glimpse of that perfection in which spirit and form dwell together in immortal harmony; truth and beauty bearing a new flower on the ancient stem of time. There was magic in the line; the earth suddenly shone with new meanings; the boy's heart danced with inward glee; it seemed as if he must break away from bonds of time and place

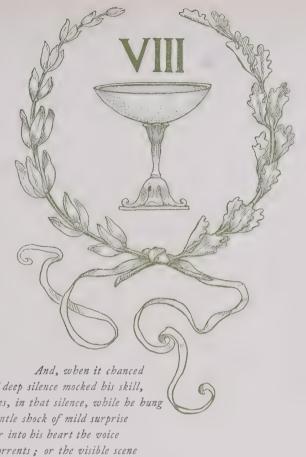
[56]











That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

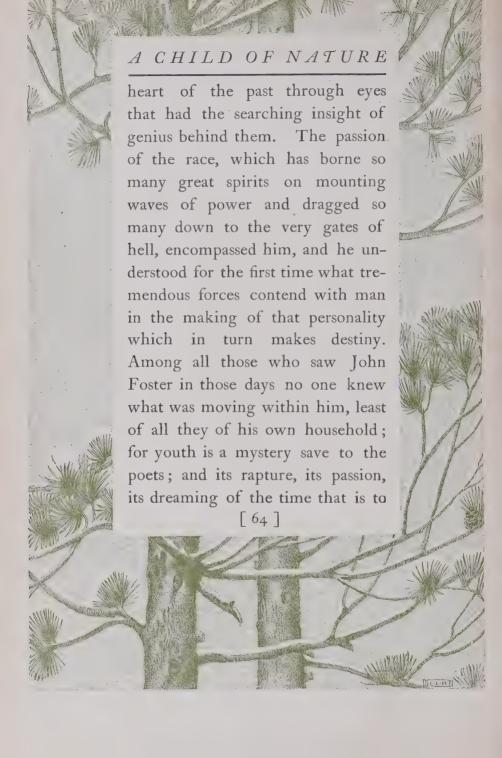




HE poets sit beside the tree of life, and one cannot learn their songs without learning also the sorrow and joy, the strife and peace, the work and rest, the hate and love, the loss and gain which make up the human story.

In the lonely countryside the solitary boy entered into the rich experience of the race; committed its crimes, fought its battles, suffered its defeats, was bruised by its sorrows, and borne aloft on the strong wings of its great aspirations. He looked into the

[63]

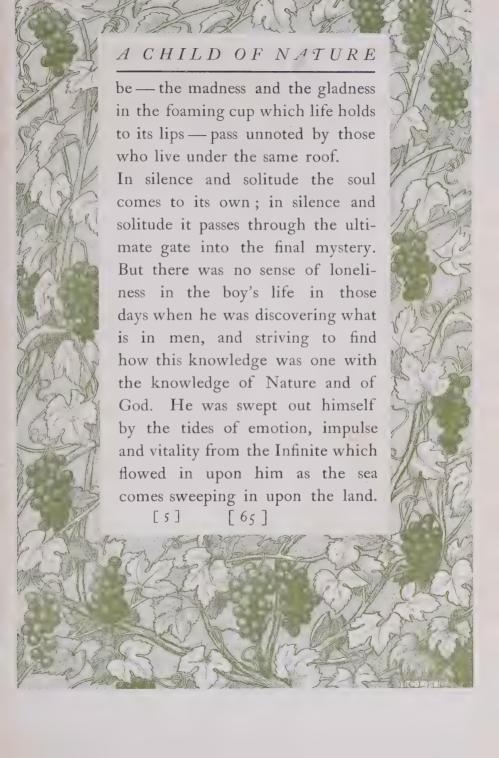


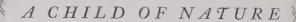




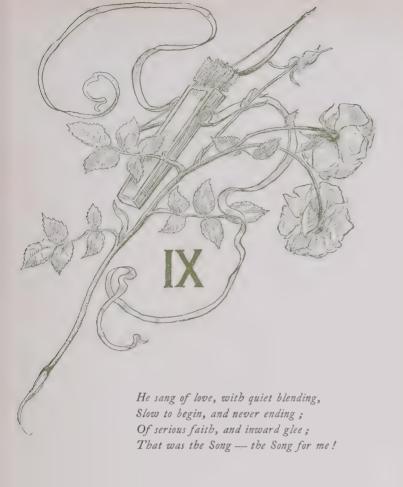




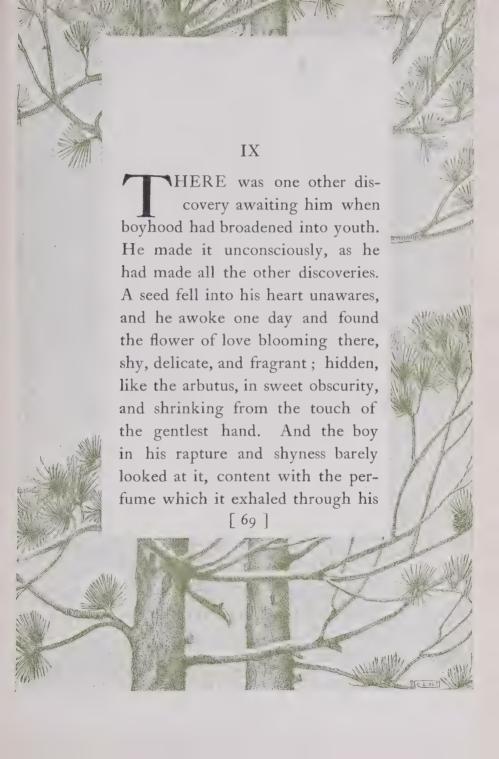


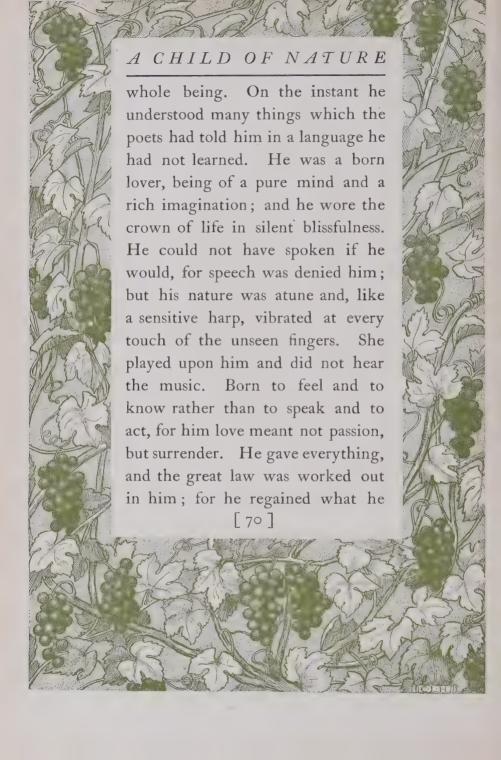


He lacked near companionship, but he was making friends with humanity, and Nature was finding place and speech for him.







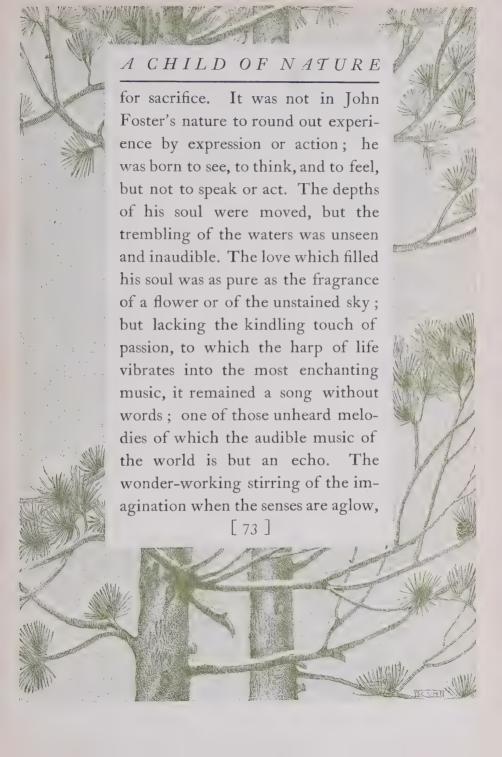


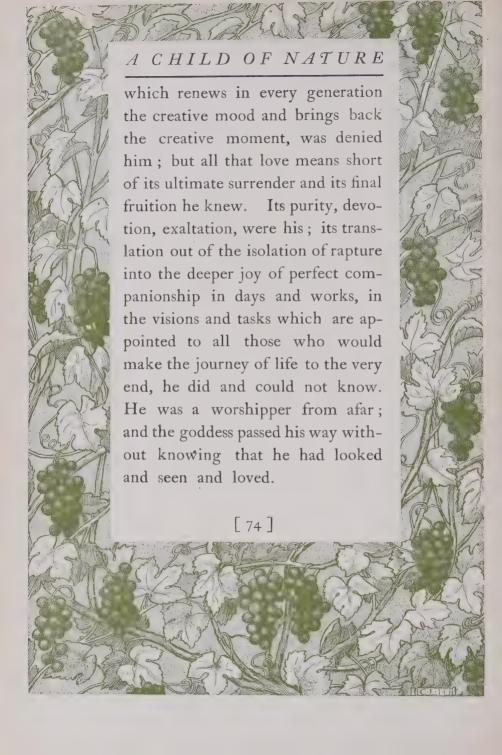
had given, increased a thousandfold. There was a shrine in his soul and there was perpetual adoration there, and he became like the beautiful soul he worshipped; slowly transformed by the creative power of that divine passion of which religion and art and service are the witnesses, and from which all holy and perfect and beautiful thoughts, words, deeds, and works are born. The tumult barely touched his senses, but set the imagination aflame. The sensitive face of the New England girl caught the glow of the morning, in which for the first time the young man, passing swiftly out of boyhood, saw the great world shining in the order

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and beauty of immortal love. Every common thing turned to gold in that light; every impure thought vanished, for Una was passing that way. In the depths of his heart there were stirrings of deep human feelings which knit him to his fellows in the silent brotherhood of universal experience. To love one human soul is to have the capacity to love all; and through a great affection for the friend at his side a man reaches out and touches hands with his remotest human kin. The miracle of love, which turns human clay into the semblance and shape of divinity, once wrought in a man's heart ripens swiftly or slowly into infinite compassion and the capacity

[72]







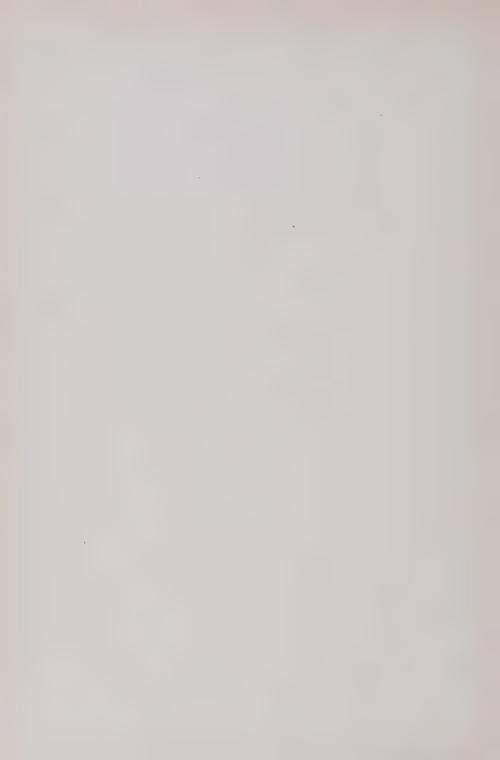
X

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves, Think not of any severing of our loves!

Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;

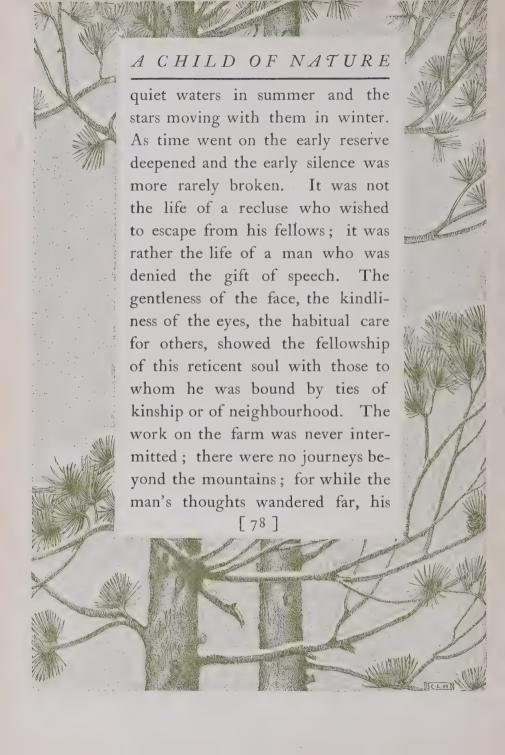
I only have relinquished one delight

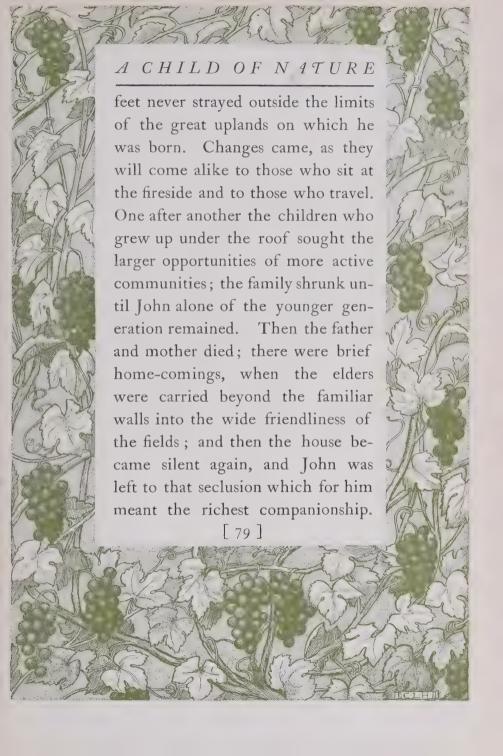
To live beneath your more habitual sway.



LIFE that silently expands through vision and thought and is undisturbed by the tumult of action keeps no reckoning of time; for the days define themselves sharply in the consciousness of those only whose tasks are set for special reasons and whose work is assigned by the clock. John Foster's life was so essentially subjective that the divisions of time made for toilers of the hour had no existence for him; days and years flowed past him in one unbroken current, the shadows of the trees cooling the

[77]





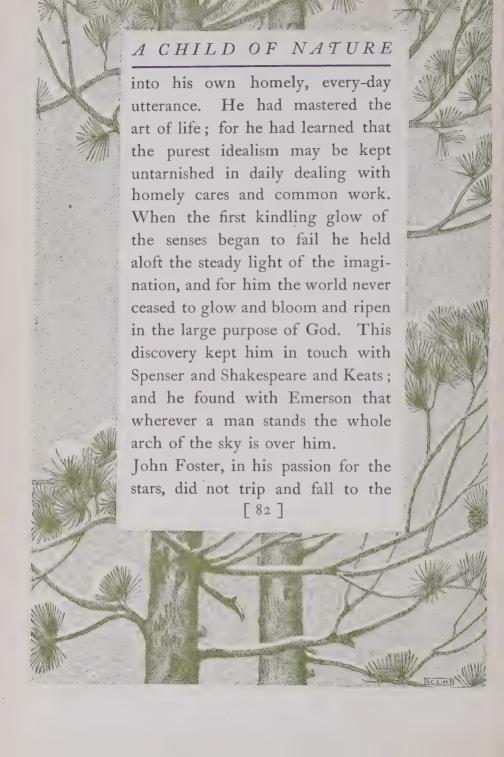
The farm was looked after, but it was a secondary interest; the silent man loved his bit of the landscape more than he loved the crops it bore. Idealist as he was to the very heart, he was saved from material disaster by habits of industry and thrift, which, as in many another case, kept the flower of the spirit well shielded from keen winds and bitter frosts.

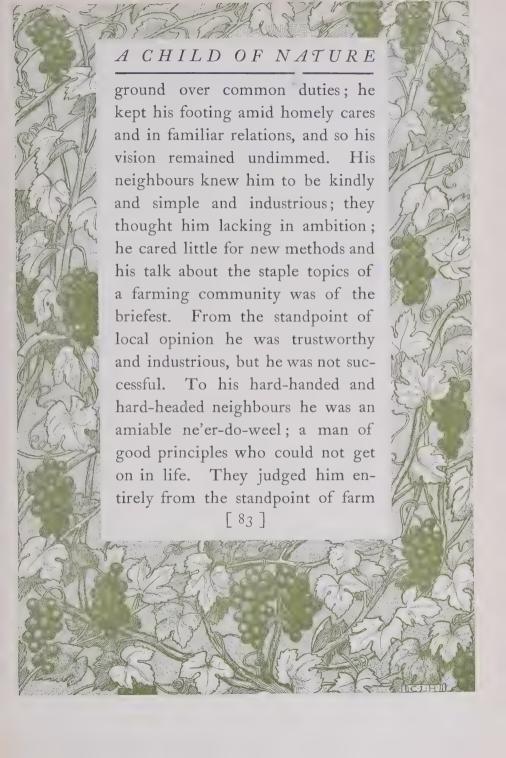
The splendour slowly softened, as youth vanished, into a tender beauty which touched the heart of the man as the earlier glory had touched his imagination. Thoughts too deep either for laughter or for tears kept company with him at work in his fields or at rest in the woods.

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It seemed to him as if the splendour which once lay on the surface of the world had not vanished, but silently sunk into the heart of things and radiated thence in a beauty more tender and pervading. He learned the artist's secret of finding and keeping all things fresh to his eye and imagination; as the glow of youth faded he found the departing loveliness reappearing in the form and shape and meaning of common things; thus gradually exchanging sight, which may grow dim, for vision which becomes clearer and more direct as the years go by. So he kept the fairyland of his early dreams at his doorstep, and translated the great speech of the poets

[6] [81]



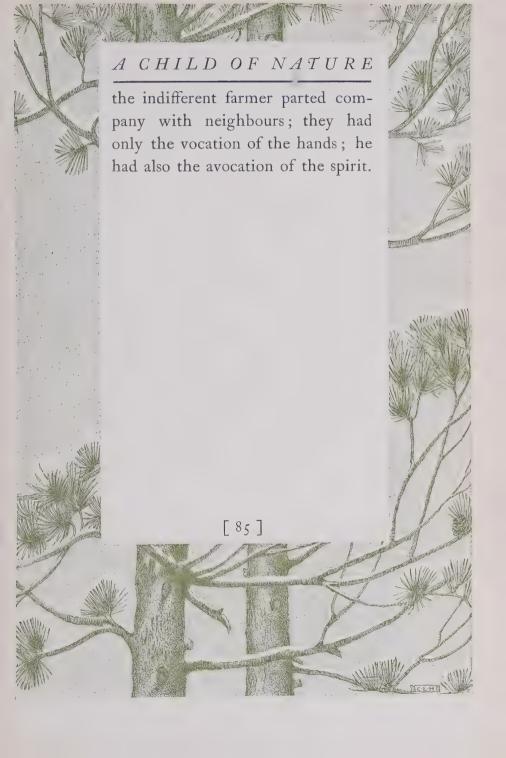




management, and he was a very indifferent farmer.

If he knew the neighbourhood opinion he was not oppressed by it. His life was so entirely the unfolding of the inward spirit, his standards were so far above local ideals, his manner of life was so individual. that without being self-centred he was independent of his surroundings; he was a rustic whose occupations were of the farm, but whose interests were of the world. It is wise to know neighbourhood opinion and to regard it for correction, admonition, and reproof; but he who would possess his own soul must live outside his neighbourhood. It was precisely at this point that

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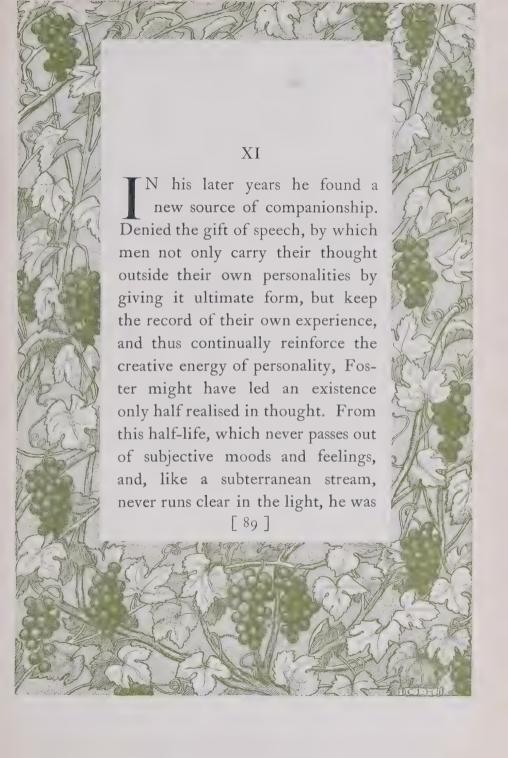




XI

The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won,
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.



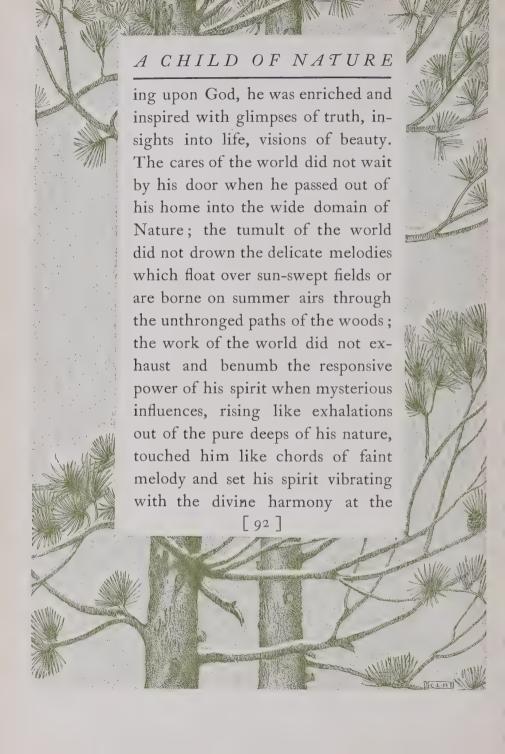


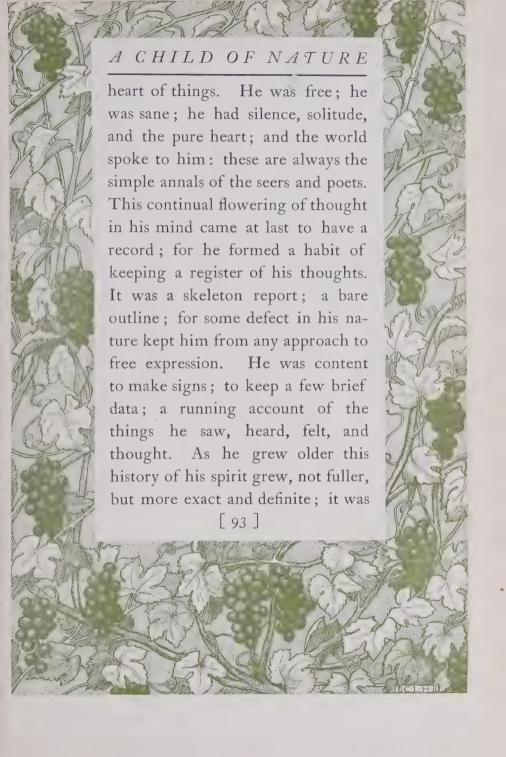
saved by the discovery that if he could not give his thought full flow and volume, he could at least keep a record of it; a kind of tally of experience. In these years of searching observation, of deep reading, of quiet meditation, the world had gradually become clear to his imagination in its vast and infinitely diversified life. As a student he had lived in many ages, explored many countries, seen many cities, heard many languages, and penetrated many experiences; as a lover of Nature he had learned many secrets of woods and fields and changing skies; as a sensitive, responsive, meditative man he had come to know life deeply and with sanity

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of insight. What other men would have called a philosophy or general scheme of things was to him simply knowledge of life borne in from many sources, gained far more by the very commonplace process of living than by any unusual process of thinking, distilled by time out of the rich substance of experience. Slowly but steadily the great order of the world revealed itself to him, and he found his own place in it; as he touched it at many points in ever-deepening harmony of relationship his nature was fertilised; for whenever a man touches that order which is the hem of the garment of God, vitality passes into him. Patiently and reverently wait-

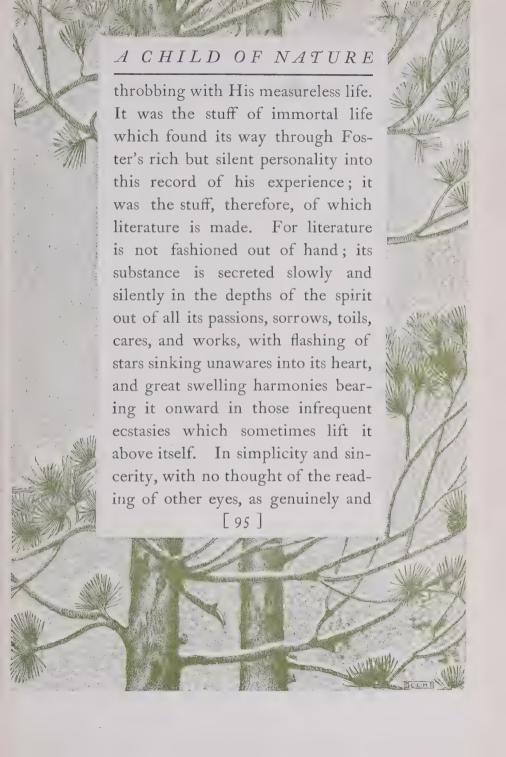
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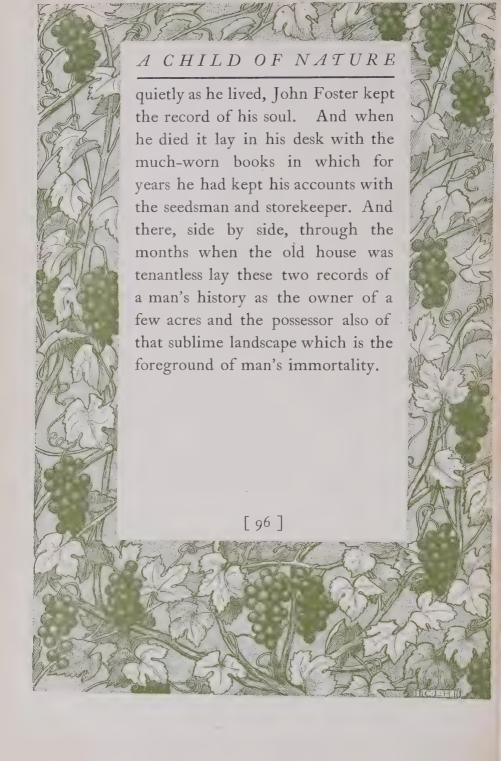




made up of slight but well-defined tracings of his course through the mysterious world of his journeying. If the little note-books in which this record was kept had fallen into the hands of an unimaginative man, they would have seemed but a confusion of abrupt and incomplete phrases; a man of insight, finding the key to their revelations, would have seen in them the stuff of which wonder-books are made: the star dust of great truths, the pollen of the imperishable flowering of imagination, the seeds of brave deeds; such gathering of treasure, in a word, as befalls the man who travels through a universe alight with the splendour of God and

[94]







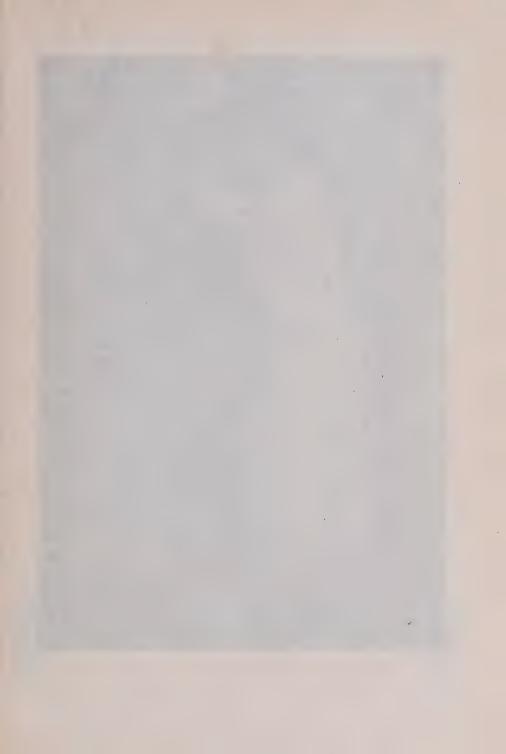


XII

PRIL slowly drifted over the mountain skies into May, and May, touched with the first delicate bloom of the tender Northern summer, ripened into June, and life crept to the door of the old house where John Foster had always met it with a smile, and climbed to the windows, and budded and bloomed in the old garden, where a few familiar and friendly flowers had always lived on intimate terms with the silent man; but there was no response to the beauty which enfolded the deserted [99]

The hand of Nature was house. on the latch, but the door remained If one who had known the love of the man for this radiant and fragrant world and the caressing gentleness of that world, had taken thought of the circumstances, it would have seemed as if Nature missed a familiar presence and were feeling for it with sensitive tendrils, and striving to recall it with voices that were musical murmurs on the fragrant breath of summer. The wide landscape softened, grew tender, stirred with the rising tide of life, and broke at last into verdure and bloom, all the hidden springs of vitality overflowing in green rivulets or rich masses of foliage;

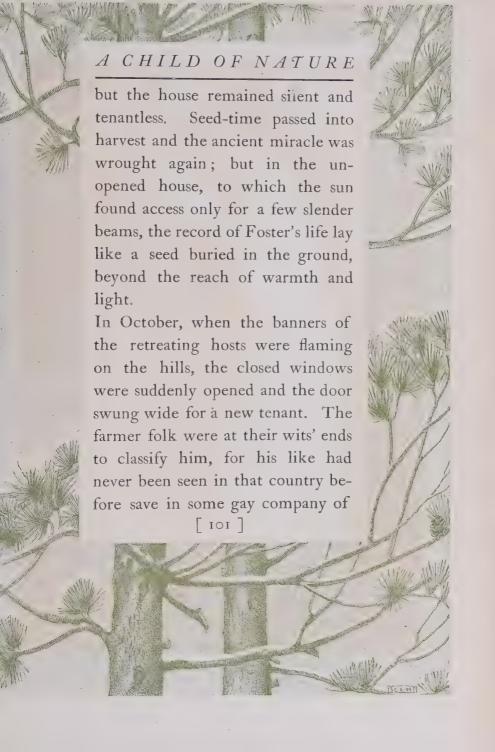
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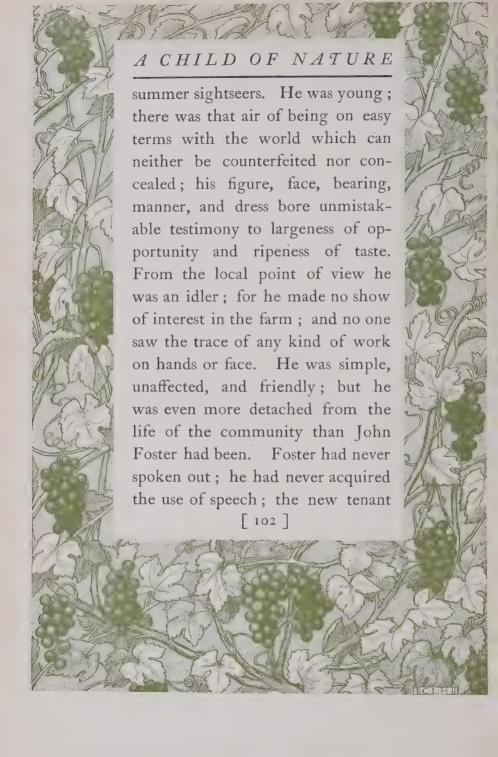


"It would have seemed as it nature missed a familiar presence."



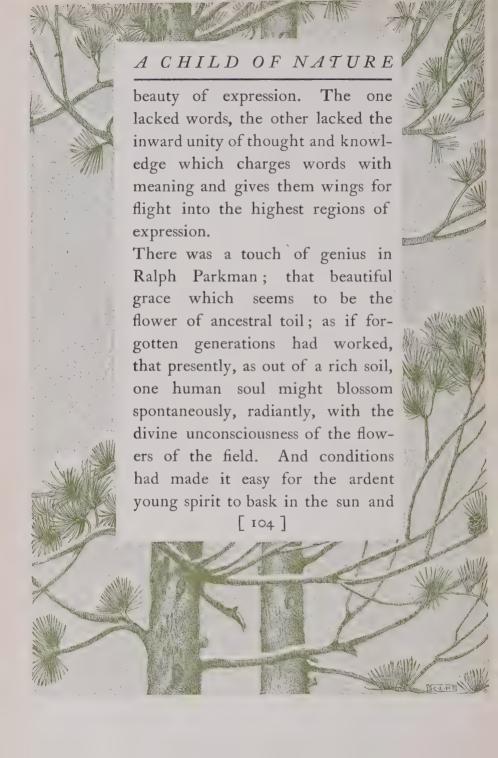


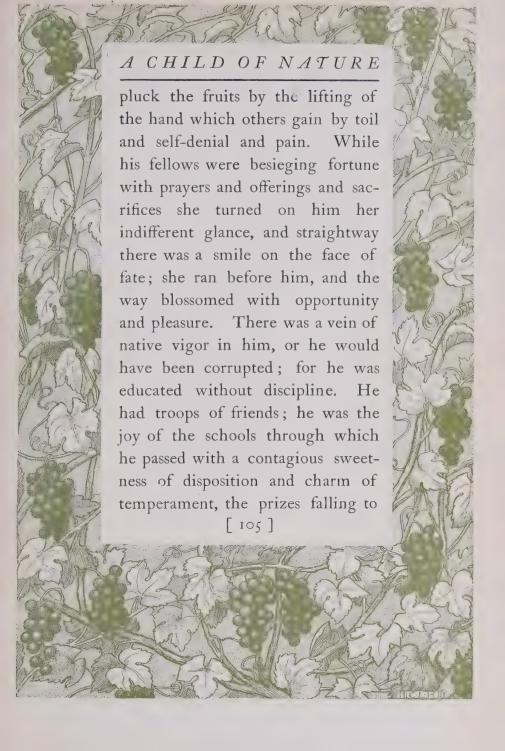




of the old house had had access to so many kinds of knowledge, had seen life in so many diverse aspects and in so many places that his individuality had been buried for the time under a mass of unassimilated learning and half-understood experiences. To Foster life had been niggardly in its gifts of outward experience; to Ralph Parkman life had been lavish: the one reached order, clearness, beauty by the unfolding of his own nature; the other was to attain these ultimate ends of living by a rich process of assimilation. To the one had been given the clear vision, the deep conviction, the inward harmony; to the other freedom, fluency, and

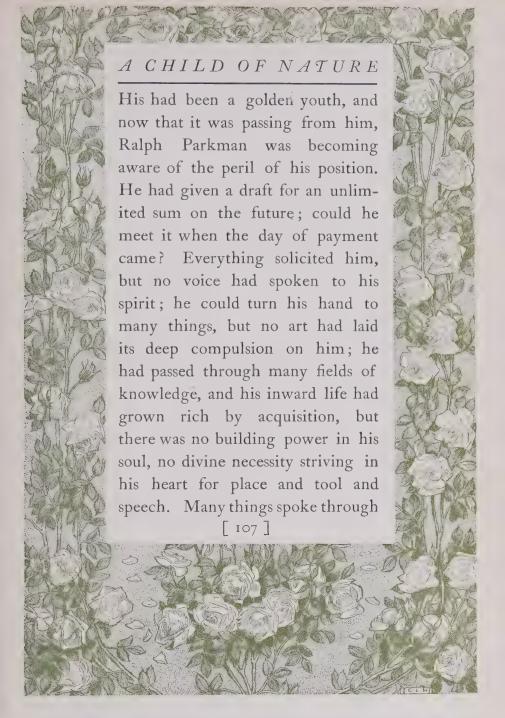
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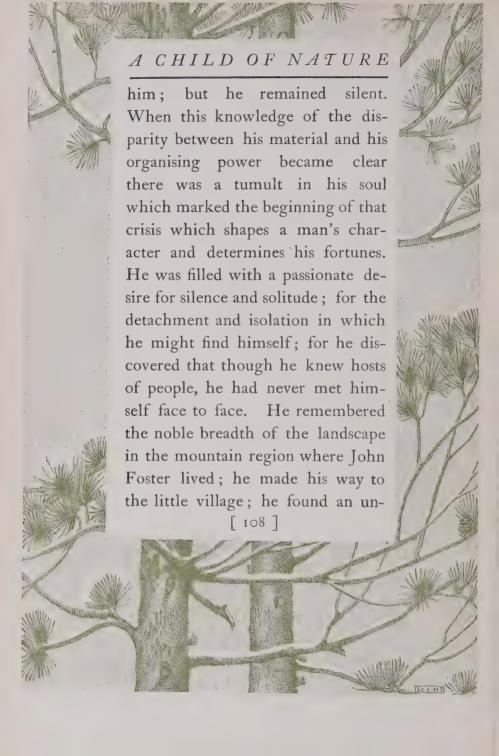


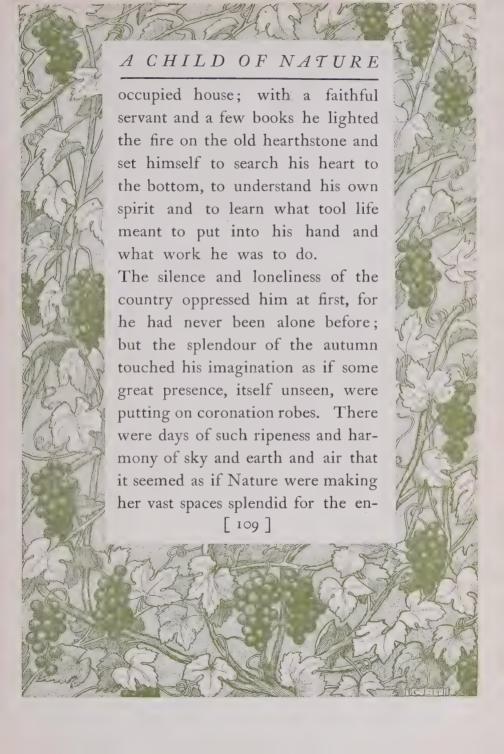


him by force, apparently, of his own inward attraction. He loved study, art, travel; and he went free-footed and sure-footed through a world which set its choice food and wine before him wherever he chose to tarry. He was thirty years old when he opened the door of John Foster's bare little study, and he had awakened more hopes than gather about most men in the full course of a lifetime. He knew so much, had seen so many things, lived in so many cities, made so many friends, spoke so many languages, and was gifted with such superb vitality and such ease and grace that he seemed capable of all things, and had become a glorious promise.

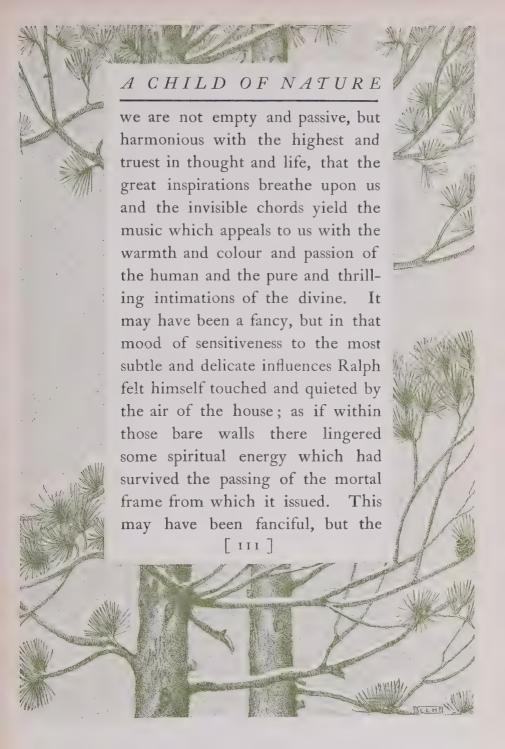
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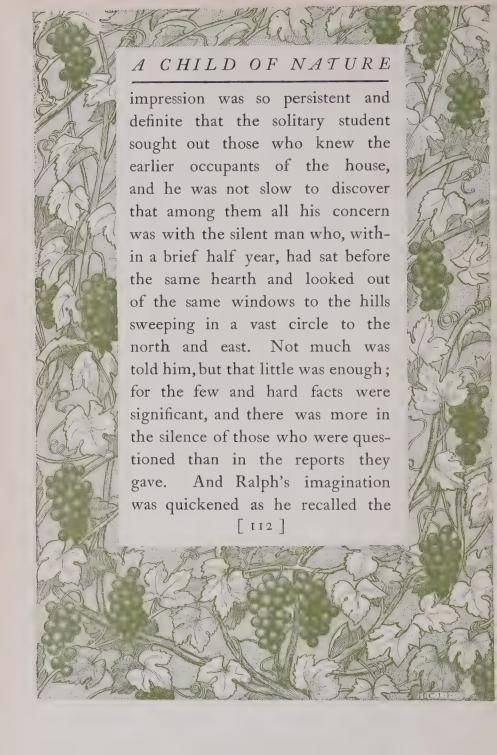






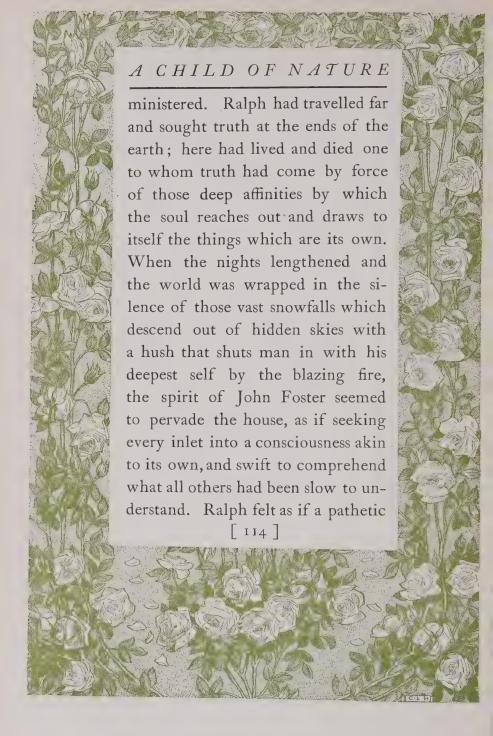
throning of some invisible spirit. In such a radiant calm, with such softness brooding over the fields, and such majesty sleeping on the hills, the stage seemed too noble for the setting of human life, with its few years and its pathetic uncertainties. Ralph's thoughts passed from himself to the beauty of the world, and he began to feel the inward peace which comes with that self-forgetfulness which is the beginning of self-knowledge. Emptied of all egoism, there was room in his spirit for Nature, and Nature brought her repose, her sanity, her deep unconsciousness. It is in such moods that the finer influences search and find us; it is in such moods, when

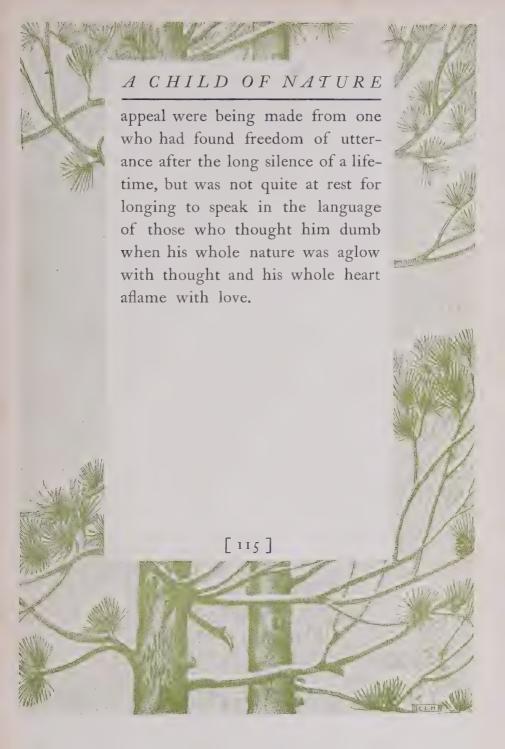




vanished life, and reconstructed the image of the vanished personalty, by the interpretation of the house and garden. The air of the old house, mellowed by the long habit of a man of hidden genius; the simple furnishings, supplemented by the presence of a few books of the kind which illumine the place where they are gathered and reveal the affinities and interests of the spirit to which they have ministered, plied the imagination of the sensitive student who had fallen heir to this rich heritage of simple living and high thinking with subtle but searching hints of a mind to which, in its deep repose, the whole world of spiritual experience had

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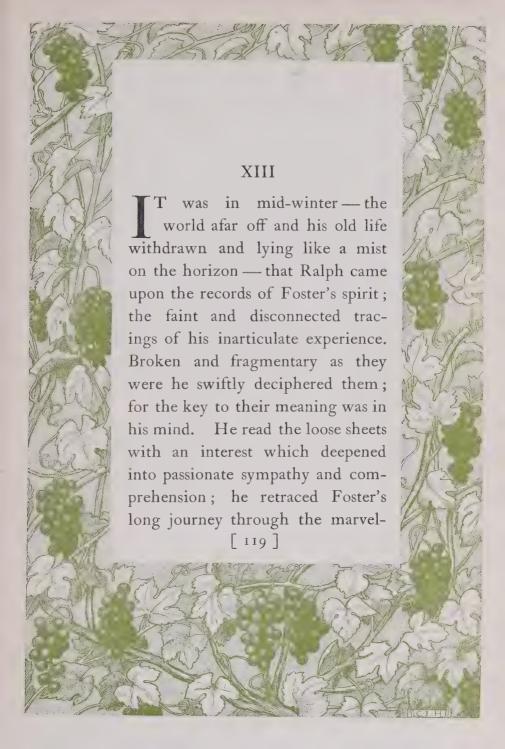




XIII

. . . Thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof That they were born for immortality.

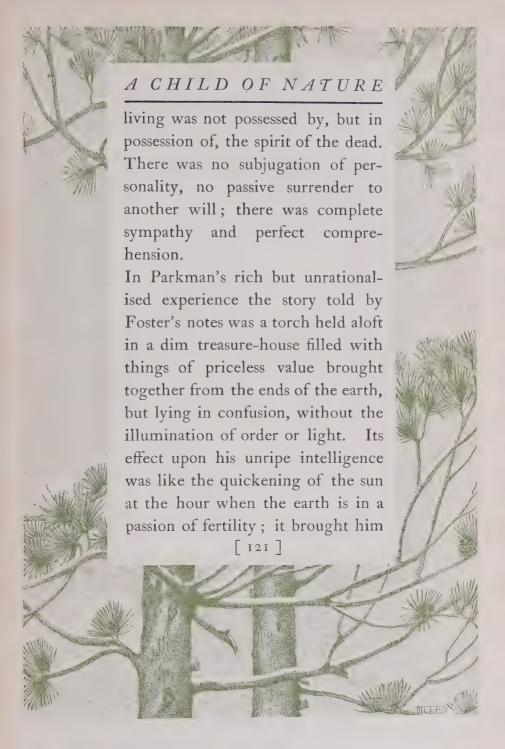


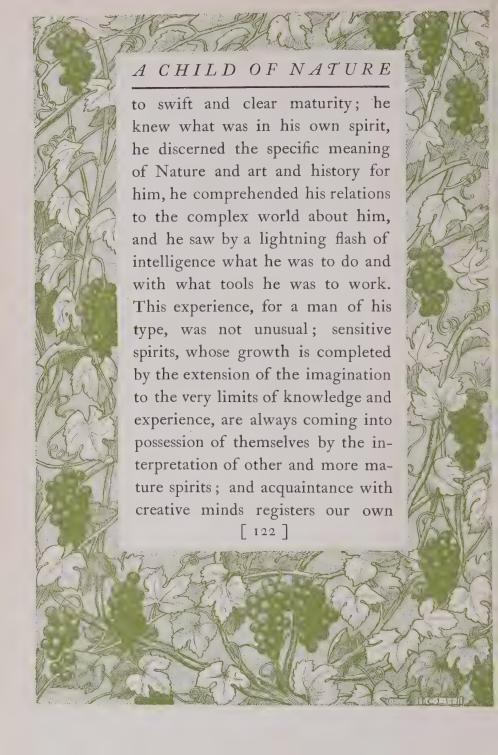


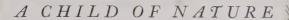
A CHILD OF NATURE

lous world which had gradually unfolded about him, noting the broadening outlook, the clarifying vision, the penetrating thought. As he read it seemed as if he were living again in his own experience this hidden life, reaching out in the silence of quiet years for the most far-reaching kinships with the movement of universal thought, and bringing itself into deep and final harmony with the spiritual order. As he penetrated into the secret history of this solitary human soul, sounding its perilous way without companionship across the deeps of life, the image of Foster became more distinct and real and the path he had taken more clear; until the

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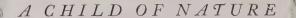






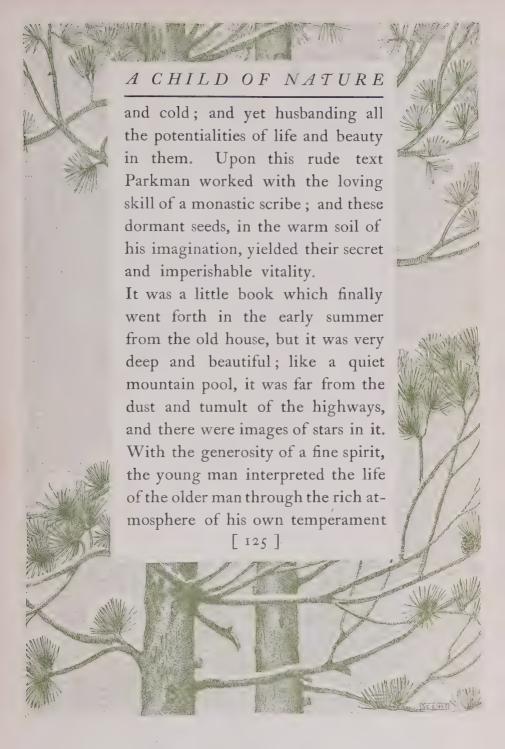
self-development. The constant service of Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and their fellows is the liberation which they accomplish in other minds.

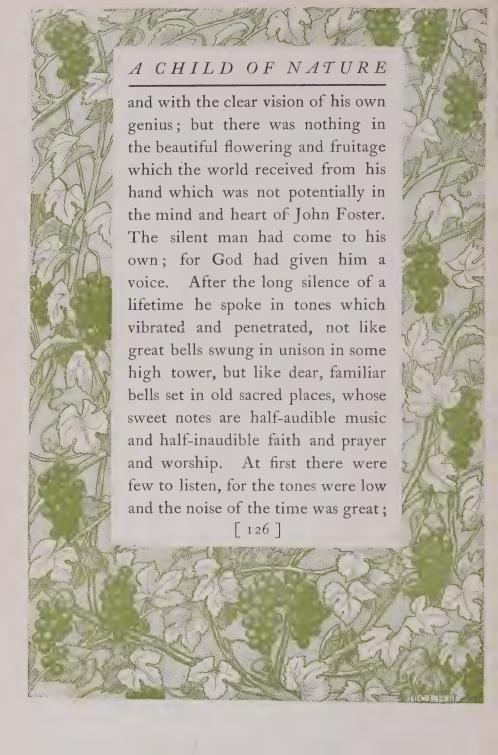
That which was peculiar in Parkman's experience and gave it dramatic interest was the resurrection of a buried soul which it effected. Having discerned the spiritual vision, the intellectual richness of Foster's life, it became his first duty to share these lost treasures with a world which is never too opulent in these ultimate forms of wealth. Before he could uncover the springs of his own genius the disciple felt the searching necessity of setting forth the teaching of the master.

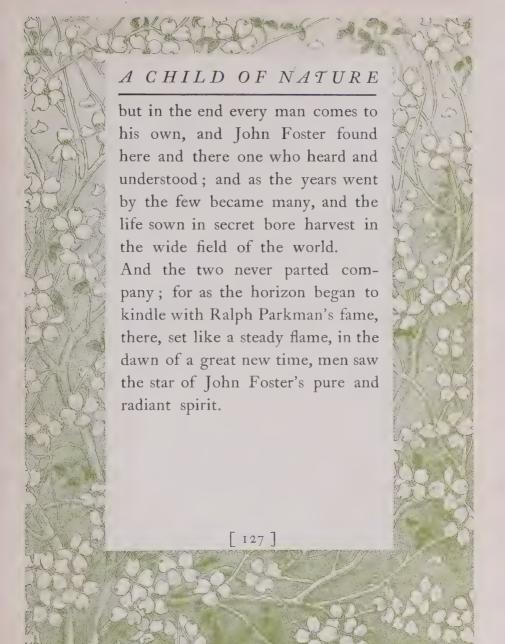


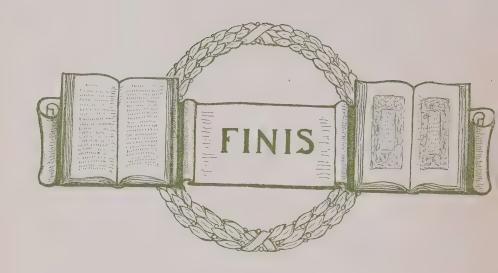
It was a work of piety and of joy; there was in the doing of it the same tender and passionate delight which sometimes came to copyist in the scriptorium of monastery when, with rich embellishment of trailing vine and blossoming flower, he gave new form to some old scripture; adding nothing which was foreign to the text, but evoking its hidden truth in fair images and fragrant traceries which interpreted to the eye what the mind read in the bare lettering. In like manner, and with a kindred joy, Ralph Parkman wrought the miracle of resurrection on John Foster's detached and unripe thoughts; mere seeds of ideas, hard and bare

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